

*Preservation is Progress
...may we be worthy stewards...*

Chautauqua Historical Society

Volume 4, Issue 3, Number 10

Fall 2006

- The Newsletter is published three times a year: winter, spring, and fall.
- The Newsletter is a membership benefit at the Piasa Bluffs Assembly (PBA), Patron, and Regular levels.
- **PBA** members have a membership in the Chautauqua Network
- CHS members are encouraged to submit articles to the editor for inclusion in the Newsletter.

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*We have 10 PBA,
64 Patron, and
9 Regular members,
and will send this Newsletter
to 133 households.*



The Chautauqua Chapel, 1925-26, story begins on Page 7

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The President's message



The past summer was really a busy one for the Historical Society. We added a lot of special events to the season's program. As I look back I think we took on too much, with too few volunteers. There was a sense of relief when the last program ended. At the same time the

events were special, so it's hard to know how and where to cut back.

The archival committee met almost every Tuesday morning. We sorted many years of *The Channels*. This publication is our best source of information for daily events at Chautauqua. Thanks to Norma Milster, Corinne Podesva, Judy Hurd, and myself we did it and feel proud of our accomplishment.

The second big project was to catalog the program materials from Children's Day, Teen Plays, and adult plays. We did pretty well on this project, but ran into a number of problems. Many of the "program books" for a presentation did not mention the year of presentation, so we need to research old *Channels* or Program books to get this information. The donated framed pictures were put on display in the Administration building during the season.

Judy Hurd and I visited the research room at the Jersey County Historical Society. Steve Voss donated a large collection of Chautauqua memorabilia to JCHS.

The collection was stored first in cardboard boxes, but it is now in a file cabinet. We hope to copy much of this information and to work with JCHS to place selected documents in archival sleeves. Perhaps some day the collection can be returned to Chautauqua. Many of you have "similar collections," and we would love to know about them and work with you to preserve them for our common history.

We received several original postcards. Jerry Benner gave us postcard copies on a CD; many of these images showed front and back of postcards. We are developing our own varied collection, and have decided to purchase a safe to protect our valuable small pieces and some documents.

Rick Ross has resigned as treasurer of the Society and from our Board, having been elected to the NPC Board. Thanks, Rick, for serving us well and faithfully. Katie Schaeffer was elected unanimously to our seven-person Board. Katie was Program Chair for NPC for several years and always helpful in scheduling CHS programs. We are grateful to her for choosing CHS as her next volunteer effort.

It was very satisfying to see Kentucky Home such an active and busy place, especially since, several years ago, one of the options the NPC Board considered was to tear the building down. The Jersey Door was beautiful, thanks to the creative efforts of Jenny Hagin Rausch. It had a new look and a new gift registry. We realized a profit of \$4000, given over to the Society and restricted to archival work and future restoration of the Kentucky Home. The Indian Giver had a record year, we are told, and we should all be gratified that this wonderful old building provides both a gathering place for Chautauquans and a source of income that funds projects to better Chautauqua.

Rose Tomlinson

PRESERVATION IS PROGRESS

...may we be worthy stewards...

Address inquires and other communications to

Tim Tomlinson

Editor, CHS Newsletter

Post Office Box 87, Elsah, Illinois 62028

Phone: 618-374-1518; email: Trt1933@aol.com

Copy/Proof Readers: Kathy Brammeier, Gary Cooper, Susan Seiber

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The mission and purpose of the Chautauqua Historical Society is the preservation and enhancement of the historic traditions and culture of New Piasa Chautauqua, Chautauqua, Illinois, the encouragement of historical research on the Chautauqua community and nearby historic districts, the publication of historical brochures, pamphlets, and other written material on New Piasa Chautauqua, remaining permanent assemblies and chautauquas in other parts of the United States and the national Chautauqua movement, and the establishment of an educational program to inform the Chautauqua community and the general public of the historical and educational value of New Piasa Chautauqua.

Flags of our Fathers

One of our successful and popular annual programs is the military funeral flag exchange program. It was introduced formally in 2004, although the community had flown the flags of deceased Chautauqua veterans prior to that year. In 2004 Chautauqua veterans and the families of veterans organized to restore the small sundial memorial located in the front of the Auditorium, and the flagpole that rose high in the Auditorium forest. Both the sundial, a memorial to William "Billy" Clarkson, a Chautauqua Marine killed in action in 1944, and the flagpole were dedicated originally in 1954. They were rededicated, fifty years later, in 2004, thanks to the generosity and spirit of our veteran's community.

That same year we raised and lowered ceremoniously four military funeral flags: James Thatcher, Frank Nickols, Marcia Drescher, and Jack Hornell, these flags given over to the Chautauqua community for this purpose. We also purchased a 48-star flag to represent the funeral flag of Billy Clarkson, given to the community by his family in 1954, but somehow lost over time. Each of the five flags was flown for a designated, and a small plaque placed near the flagpole identified the respective Chautauqua veteran. When not installed, each flag was kept in a simple wooden case, and included the identifying plaque.

The Chautauqua Historical Society has accepted the responsibility of stewardship for these important representations of American history. Recently Bill and Gordon Grundmann gave us their Dad's flag for safekeeping and community use. Dr. William Grundmann served in the Army Medical Corps in World War II, even though at the outset of the war he was far beyond the age when service was expected. But the country needed doctors, and he answered the call. Thank you, Bill and Gordon; the flag will be part of next Season's tribute to our common history.

We've looked on gaining the Grundmann flag as an opportunity to organize our stewardship more systematically. We have sent a letter to the appropriate family members for the five flags for which we now have responsibility, stating the nature of our stewardship. First, the flags are considered the property of the families, and are on long-term loan, remaining in our custody only so long as we fulfill reasonable obligations and expectations. The flags will now be flown on a rotating basis, four each year and the Clarkson flag. Second, we will provide a fitting case for storing the flag, and the flag will be cleaned after each "tour of duty." A plaque will

be provided for each flag—the plaques are identical, except for the names. Flags will be returned on receipt of a written request. These conditions are, basically, the parameters of our stewardship.

What about the possibility of flying a flag that a family does not want to give up for long-term loan, but does want it to be part of the flag exchange program. We believe this can be worked out, and are willing to try on request. We will need a family to state in writing that they wish to have a family member's flag flown, and we will add it to the rotation schedule, advising the family when we will need the flag for temporary use. We will provide an appropriate plaque and will have the flag cleaned following its being used. Every flag, of course, has its own formal "raising" and "retreating" ceremony, staffed by the Chautauqua Veteran's Flag Detail. So, if you are reading this, and want to become part of the flag-flying program but not give over the flag on a long-term basis, contact Tim Tomlinson, who will work out the specific details for you.

We consider the Chautauqua community to be honored greatly by those families who allow us to fly the military funeral flags of family veterans. We think also that the families are honored in turn, and we would like to encourage Chautauquans to consider becoming part of the program in one way or another.

We have had a lot of encouraging comments about the flag exchange program and the 4th of July ceremony sponsored by the Chautauqua Historical Society and the community Program Committee. This past Season we honored again our World War II veterans: Bob Fischer, Bill Osborn, Ted Palmer, Jerry Podesva, Phil Polster, Bill Randall, and Charlie Schaeffer. Rev. Dan Zimmerman, Ed Lewitz and Ned Bradley of Elsah, and Russell Dunham of Jerseyville, a Congressional Medal of Honor recipient, the last surviving World War II CMH honoree from Illinois, joined them. We thank these citizen soldiers who gave valued service to their nation in peace and war.



Roque

At some point during the 1970s, when the *Equal Rights Amendment* was wending its (unsuccessful) way through state legislatures for adoption as an amendment to the U. S. Constitution, a serious act of civil disobedience occurred on the New Piasa Chautauqua grounds. A revered and hallowed sign posted by the Roque Court adjacent to the Administration Building disappeared. The sign read: "This court is for men only."

The Roque Court was largely unused and the sport had become *passé* by the time the sign was unceremoniously ferreted away. That was not always the case. The American Roque League describes play as "the game of the century." Roque is, of course, modeled on Croquet, a sport favored by the Royal families of France and England more than 300 years ago. Very minimal research suggests that croquet was introduced into the United States in the early 1870s. We know Bishop John Vincent Heyl, co-founder of the Chautauqua movement, brought it to the New York Chautauqua. The National Croquet Association was formed in 1882, and in 1889 the National Roque Association was formed—the letters "C" and "T" were deleted from the word croquet and rules were created to make the sport "more scientific."

Roque was very popular as a recreational activity in our Chautauqua. Four courts were available at one time: the present court adjacent to the Administration building, what is now the horseshoe court, the space between the Administration building and *Spring Inn* (Milster's cottage), and the space immediately south of the Drackett cottage on Springfield Avenue. The site near the Milster's cottage was the Women's Court.

Only the Men's Court site remains as a viable playing field, and for many years it has been a somewhat forlorn setting. It was not always so, as this "letter to the Editor" published in the Smithsonian Magazine attests:

Dear Sir: Your comparison of croquet to billiards would have more aptly described to the derivative game of Roque, which I played for a number of summers at the Chautauqua community north of Alton, Illinois.

Roque was played on a packed clay court with two pegs and the usual number of wickets, bordered by a four-inch high concrete curb, permitting wicked one and two-cushion carom shots. The combination of a fast surface and caroms intensified the competitive spirit.

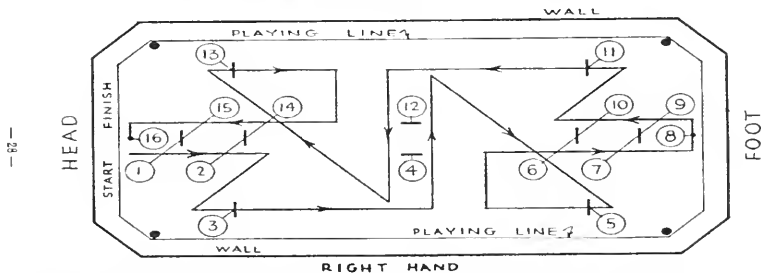
*D. O. Cardwell
Shreveport, Louisiana.*

Chautauquan Bob Hormell remembers well daily play at the Men's Court.

"add the Hormell quote for about five lines, indicating he may submit a longer article for an upcoming newsletter

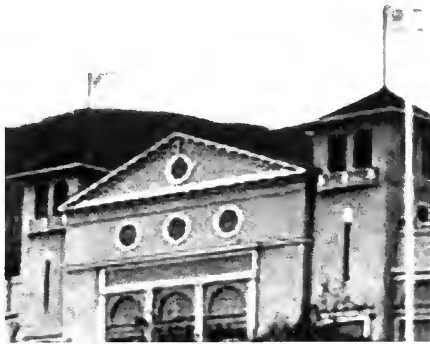
EXPLANATORY DIAGRAM

LEFT HAND



Points Shall Be Made in the Sequence of 1 Through 16 as Indicated by the Line and Arrows. Arch Face Number Given in Circle as Referred to by the Rules Starting Position of Balls Shown by Filled Circles.

Landmark Status for Colorado Chautauqua Historic Auditorium



The Colorado Chautauqua was founded in 1898 during the height of America's first truly national mass educational and cultural movement, the Chautauqua movement, which started in 1874 and ended in 1930. During that time approximately 45 million Americans had attended a chautauqua. Chautauquas introduced prominent speakers, high culture and popular entertainment to no urban areas, and outdoor living to many whose cities were becoming increasingly congested.

"As we enter our second century this is a profoundly positive milestone," said Susan Connelly, executive director of the Colorado Chautauqua Association. "As a National Historic Landmark we must preserve the past while also carefully orchestrating what we offer our visitors and residents. We are stewards of the original Boulder Chautauqua vision *and* architects of a dynamic second century that will surely benefit Boulder," Connelly added.

The process took almost three years from start to final approval. The Colorado Chautauqua Association and the Denver regional center of the National Park Service spent nearly two years crafting a

persuasive 63-page nomination package, which had to be approved by two national advisory committees before a final decision from Secretary Norton. The first committee, the Landmarks Committee of the National Park System Advisory Board, gave its unanimous approval in October 2005, aided by the fact that two committee members had visited the Colorado Chautauqua in person and testified

positively of their experience. The NPSAB met in Philadelphia Jan. 13, 2006, voting unanimously to recommend to Secretary Norton that the Colorado Chautauqua in Boulder be designated a National Historic Landmark.

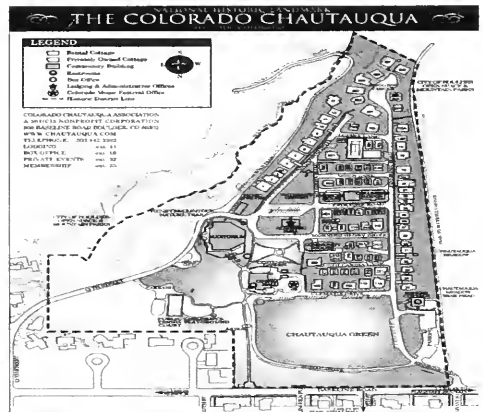
Editor's note:

The Colorado Chautauqua is one of only three remaining chautauquas in the United States and the only site west of the Mississippi River in continuous operation with its original structures intact.

The preceding information is copied directly from a Spring 2006 press release announcing the designation of the Colorado Chautauqua as an Historic Landmark. **Congratulations to our western "sister" community.** The highlighted area above points up a recurring problem in information dissemination, that is that the Boulder Chautauqua is "one of three remaining" chautauquas. The same claim appeared in the July/August 2006 issue of *Presentation*, the journal of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. By our count, and depending on how the definition of a chautauqua is constructed, there are at least nine remaining chautauquas, and all of them were started before Colorado's 1898 beginning.

Another point: what about landmark status for our historic auditorium, one which preceded the Boulder building by eight years? We celebrate another centennial in 2009, one hundred years as New Piasa Chautauqua. What a great way to celebrate—being awarded landmark status.

Tim Tomlinson



2006 Season Highlights

The Chautauqua Historical Society, with the NPC Program Committee, presented several programs in the 2006 season. First, we planned and administered the annual flag exchange program and the July 4th flag ceremony, where our Veterans Flag Detail performed very well, as usual. The community flag was raised on Memorial Day and retreated on Labor Day.

We sponsored seven separate *Piasa Bluffs Assembly* events. The "Artists Stroll" along Springfield Avenue was a great success, with about 100 persons visiting cottages to view the work of invited artists. Cottage porches became exhibit stages, and Springfield was filled with folks strolling from one porch to another. Then, on July 2, we opened our first ever "major exhibit" --an example of a 19th century tent that might have been located in many places on the Chautauqua grounds in the early days of the community. Scott and Lori Adams were marvelously helpful in providing a unique tent complete with furnishings, sited near the north side of the Auditorium. Rose and Tim Tomlinson created a series of exhibit boards that were placed near and beside the tent. A large group of Chautauquans visited the area after Chapel services on opening day. Rose and Judy Hurd dressed in period costume to describe life in a tent to the children of Play School. The exhibit was open on July 4th, and the following weekend. It was a grand success. Again, it would not have happened without the efforts of Scott and Lori and we sincerely thank them.

The July 4th flag ceremony, where we honored World War II veterans, was well attended. Tim Tomlinson organized the music program for the ceremony; Rick Ross and Gary Cooper made certain everything happened at the appropriate times. In addition, on July 7, Chautauqua Veterans Memorial Day, the community flags (Auditorium, all buildings, front and back gates) were lowered to half-staff.

A Sunday evening "Show and Tell" at the Town Hall drew a lot of enthusiastic patrons. The program started with a presentation of old photographs and postcards, late 19th and early 20th century images of Chautauqua. Audience participation was lively, with many folks commenting on and providing information about the pictures. Several people displayed additional historical artifacts, of great interest to those attending. People moved around the room examining these historical artifacts and asking questions of the owners.

The 4th Annual Chautauqua Platform Lecture, presented by Dr. Julie Dunn-Morton from the St. Louis Mercantile Library, featured a talk on regional landscape painting.

People from the Elsie and Principia communities were invited to the program. Other "like" programs included a talk on music and the river by local composer Jean King, a film and lecture on the noted architect Bernard Maybeck, given by Tim Tomlinson, and a travelogue on the People and Art of Mexico, also presented by Tim Tomlinson. We cancelled a book review that had been scheduled as part of the *Piasa Bluffs Assembly* programming.

Since some of the later programs were not well attended; we are reviewing our options in planning for the 2007 season. We believe, at the very least, that we will reduce the total number of CHS-sponsored programs. Your comments and observations and suggestions are most welcome.

Chautauqua Scholar's Prize

The Chautauqua Golf Tournament, started by Jim McBride, is about ten years old. Over the last decade it has changed leadership, venue, lunch menus, and has added new elements.

One new element is a monetary award to Chautauqua's undergraduate college students. All children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren of Chautauqua leaseholders are eligible for the prize; direct involvement in the tournament is not a criterion for eligibility. Funds come from a portion of the tournament entry fee and from other contributions.

Jim Whitely, in charge of the tournament for several years, had the idea for the program, and the Chautauqua Historical Society helps with stewardship of the funds and administration of the selection and award process. Society directors see involvement as a logical extension of the Society and Chautauqua's commitment to education. Eight prizes (\$150 each) were awarded in 2005-06. Another eight prizes will be awarded in 2006-07, four in each semester. Selection is by lottery; participants are nominated by a leaseholder; prior award recipients are not eligible for this year's lottery. First semester 2006-07 awards will be made by the end of November 2006. An individual letter explaining the program has been sent to all Chautauqua leaseholders.

The golf tournament is like any other program that depends on volunteers to make it happen. Jenny Rausch ran the very successful 2006 tournament. Margaret Quaka will be the 2007 tournament director. We will explore with her the possibility of continuing the Chautauqua Scholar's Prize program in the 2007 season, and will inform everyone of the decision.

A Mother Church....

The American Methodist Episcopal Church does not have a "Mother Church" in the sense of a founding location that is honored by all believers. So, to describe the Methodist Church in Elсах as Chautauqua's



"mother church" is not really appropriate. At the same time, when our community was founded in 1885 by two separate Conferences, the closest Methodist church was in Elсах. Its pastor, E. L. Cole, was a member of our 1885 founding committee. Familiar with the area, Cole helped with the arrangements to select the site for the Piasa Bluffs Assembly, the original name of Chautauqua. Cole was the first official preacher for the new community.

The Elсах Methodist Society was the only religious organization in Elсах in the 1850s when the town was founded. The church was dedicated on December 13, 1874. Circuit preachers served it. Among these was J. A. Scarrit, the original owner of the Buffy Griesedieck cottage, and J. B. Corrington, who lived in the Polster cottage. There are other Chautauqua connections. A group of Methodist laymen from St. Louis, some from Chautauqua, invested in a resort development high on the bluffs between Elсах and Chautauqua. The resort coexisted with Chautauqua until the late 1890s, when it folded. The Reverend Edmund Barnes ministered to the Elсах congregation in the early 1920s, and when his wife died, he left the Elсах ministry and moved to Chautauqua where he managed the Kentucky Home, owned at the time by a relative. Today, several Chautauqua families are connected to and worship at this old Elсах church. It is now 132 years old, and little changed in appearance from the time it was built.

All the windows were memorial donations.

A New Chapel for Chautauqua

Our "Chautauqua on the Mississippi" had a strong religious orientation, as did almost all of the chautauqua communities across the country. The folks who began the movement at Lake Chautauqua in New York State in 1874 wanted a pleasing outdoors environment for religious instruction and the practice of Christian values. Beginning with tents, virtually every chautauqua modeled on the New York experiment built a central religious structure, often combining its purpose with the educational objectives of the movement. Auditoriums, sometimes called tabernacles, were celebrations of the religious beliefs of the founders.

Our chautauqua started in 1885 under the auspices of a group of Methodist ministers and influential laymen who represented Conferences in southern Illinois and St. Louis. The first major construction project was the auditorium. There is reason to believe that the auditorium was built by 1890. It was located near the physical center of the community, about halfway between the river and the entrance gate for people coming from the east by land. It was the community's first permanent religious structure, and it provided a



venue also for the cultural, educational and entertainment programs that were part of each season's events at our early Chautauqua.

The idea of building a separate chapel

was conceived at some point in the early 1920s. Why? Perhaps, as is argued in local "myth-rumor," attendance in the auditorium had so declined that the prospect of a smaller space seemed a good idea. The *Alton Telegraph* reported (2/24/1924) that the Ladies Civic Improvement Association would build a non-denominational chapel at a cost of \$4,000. The announcement was made at an LCIA luncheon at the Missouri Athletic Association, attended by 120 women. Mrs. G. V. R. Mechin and Mrs. C. H. Taylor, LCIA vice-presidents, told the group that one-half of the funds had been raised, and funds for the windows and furnishings had been fully pledged. All fourteen windows were memorial donations.

Continued on page 8

Continued from page 7

The cornerstone was laid on July 4, 1925, with the Reverend F. M. Van Treese presiding at the ceremony. Van Treese played a major role in the founding of the community and its early days as the *Piasa Bluffs Assembly*. He owned a cottage across from the chapel site (Hormell cottage). Religious services that year were still

held in the auditorium: morning services every day at 9:30 a.m.; hymn singing on Thursday evenings; Sunday school, formal services, and vespers on Sundays.

The *Alton Telegraph* for August 9, 1926 headlined **Little Church at Chautauqua Is Open For Use.** "Piasa Chautauqua now has its own little church in the dell. The chapel erected in the valley through the efforts of the



Ladies Civic Improvement Association was dedicated yesterday afternoon. Until now the religious services at the resort had been held in the auditorium, the platform of which, on week days, was given over to diverse secular and sometimes frivolous diversions."

The new chapel was named in honor of Mrs. Emma Kupferle, the principal donor who passed away the previous year. (There is some evidence, though not in the lease records, that Kupferle owned the Dave and Chris Hagin cottage on Springfield at one time, as well as the Adams cottage on St. Louis Ave.) The Reverend F. M. Van Treese presided over the 4 p.m. dedication service. Mrs. G. V. R. Mechin made the formal presentation on behalf of the LCIA, with Van Treese accepting for the community. Preachers included clergymen from Roodhouse, Plano, and Alton, Illinois. Later that day, memorial services were held in the chapel for Chautauquans



who died the previous year, including Mrs. Kupferle and the husbands of the two LCIA vice presidents who worked on the chapel project, Mr. G. V. R. Mechin and Mr. Charles H. Taylor. Each has a memorial window.

The "great seal" of New Piasa Chautauqua cites religion, recreation, and education as principal characteristics of Chautauqua life. New members to the community are expected to support the religious life at Chautauqua, and the "church" is more formally organized than in the past, except for perhaps the original first decade. The *New Piasa Chautauqua Church Assembly* provides a structure for Sunday school and formal services, and the chapel is used on occasion for weddings and memorial services. In recent years, through the activities of the Stewardship Committee, the Auditorium has been used again for religious services as an alternative setting, particularly during that part of the annual season when community attendance is at its height. Auditorium or chapel, religion is central to Chautauqua's heritage.

